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FLOOR DEBATE

April 11, 2003 LB 305

owners to register their boats in a county other than the county of their residence. Such boats where the boat may be used, such as Lake McConaughy, could register in Keith County. The titling, however, would still remain in the county of residence with the county clerk. This change came from the request of several county offices. Second, Section 22 of page 4, the minimum distance that a boat may be followed for wake jumping has increased from 30 yards to 50 yards. In addition to that, wake jumping will not be allowed behind a boat towing someone. This is an important issue that has come to light in my legislative district and throughout the state. The third, Sections 22 and 24 on page 4 and 5 of the amendment make several changes to the related operator age. Currently, no one under the age of 14 may operate a personal watercraft on the waters of the state of Nebraska. There is a loophole and motorboats are not included in that same language. This would close that, since the current law does not address motorboats in our existing statutes. In addition, no one under the age of 16 may operate motorboats or personal watercraft with someone in tow. Under Section 24 of the amendment, a business would not be allowed to rent a boat or a jet ski to someone under 18 compared to the current limit of 16. Most of those proposals, if not all of them, came from more national standards that we have reviewed in the past year. Also in Section 23, there is an expansion of the boat safety course, which currently...which is currently required only for individuals under the age of 16 to operate a jet ski. This would immediately include those wishing to operate a motorboat for those who are under the age of 16. The age at which training is required for other individuals would gradually increase over the next several years until operators under the age of 25 would be required to have such training by January 1, 2005. Finally, Section 26 of the amendment on page 6 and 7 requires that the State Patrol be notified of boating accidents involving a death, life threatening injury, or missing person. It further directs the State Patrol to collaborate with Game and Parks staff or other law enforcement agency in any resulting investigation. Thankfully, we have historically had only 5 to 10 fatalities a year, but in some of those fatalities, we have seen some breakdown in the cooperation, and this will assure that information is collected and maintained in the case of the accident. In summary, I believe this represents a fair